

Consolidation Task Force
March 19, 2018
Smyrna High School

Meeting was opened at 6:35 by Representative Jaques. Members present were Robert Overmiller, Lauren Hudson, Loretta Greig, Susan Bunting, Kevin Ohlandt, Dusty Blakey, John Marinucci, Jeff Taschner, Tammy Croce, Mark Dufendach, Dan Shelton, Mary Cooke, Kathy Demarest (for Vicki Gerht), Mary Nash Wilson and Jon Sheehan.

Representative Jaques asked for subcommittee reports:

Teachers & Staff – Dr. Blakey, last meeting was February 20th. Focus has been related to county side system and what we need to do to set path forward. Looks like we will add new recommendations based on what is discussed tonight. We have been working on what a county wide system would look like. New Castle County would have larger area than both of other counties combined. Looking at things as they are and make recommendations to make changes to improve things as they are.

Academics & Student Needs - Met on March 12th at Smyrna SD office. Early Childhood programs, good recommendations for any size districts, have not been focused on county wide districts. Hard look at impact that early childhood education makes on the child's long term goals in schools. We do have recommendations, up to 8 now. We have one more meeting on April 16th, it will be our final meeting, we should have another recommendation or two.

Finance - Three district model vs. county wide model. We are starting to make our recommendations and will have final meetings in Dover to finalize. A question was asked by the Chair if Finance subcommittee is dealing with property reassessment. They are looking at data and will see how it will impact our recommendations.

Structures - Rep. Jaques let it be known he did not have notes. They have gone through all the back services and district office services, preparing our recommendations, will have 8. One is making a recommendation to the SBE to look at criteria for public schools as we have for Charter schools so they can be judged equally and establish criteria for state takeover of school districts and possibility of merging districts when it comes up. We will have recommendation on that. Next meeting is April 11th at Legislative Hall.

Any comments from any taskforce:

Mr. Ohlandt stated that he performed his own independent report regarding question around having too many administrators in Delaware. He believes upon review of information received through his FOIEA's to district that we do not have too many overall in Delaware. Most districts are at the right amount based on types of needs they have in their schools.

Rep. Jaques stated that the IPA and University of Delaware are to conduct a study so it will be independent and match findings against like school districts throughout the country.

Reminders: April 23rd, next full task force meeting at Legislative Hall in hearing room, at 5:00 p.m. so we can go over all the recommendations from all 4 subcommittees. We will vote on them as a taskforce, work on report date of May 15th.

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Rep. Jaques asked all subcommittee chairs, if they have any questions, to please contact him or Madinah so they can work through any problems you may have with format.

There was no public comment.

It was asked if there were any other comments. Mr. Ohlandt asked for further clarification on the Structures recommendation about possible state takeovers. We are going to ask State Board what policy and procedures would be if we applied to 19 school districts, and how we as a state could take them over, or combine with a joint school district. We are going to ask them if they could they put something in code. Currently there is nothing in code, should have something in writing. Structures will have this recommendation. Chapter 10 in Title 14 doesn't have anything in it. Kevin Ohlandt has asked it to be noted he is vehemently against this recommendation.

John Marinucci asked if there has been discussion developed at all as to what role the local school board would be in cases of a takeover? Chairman Jaques stated we are still in the early stages, Structures committee will be making a recommendation but it's a long way down the road, and would need legislation. DSBA would have input into this.

This will be voted on at the Consolidation Taskforce meeting on April 23rd. Prior to that, it needs to be voted on and accepted by the Structures committee as they are the group making the recommendation.

It was noted by a few members in attendance that are also part of the Structures committee that they did not recall every discussing this topic at one of their meetings. It was stated that it was discussed at the meeting held at Beacon Middle School in Lewes at the January 2018 meeting.

There will be 24 total recommendations, we will take one at a time and they will be explained in detail by committee chair. All committee members will receive recommendations prior to the April 23rd Consolidation Taskforce meeting for review. Team feels that a week would be good if received them prior to April meeting. Subcommittee chairs will forward to Madinah so she can turn them around and send to all the members.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.